

Subject: HILL STATEMENT
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1 - 2004
South West site
provision

Statement from Keith Hill MP

Labour Housing Minister, Keith Hill MP, commenting on Michael Howard's visit to a gypsy site in the South West today, said,

"Michael Howard has a cheek to highlight the lack of suitable legal sites for gypsies. It was the Tories in 1994, when he was Home Secretary, who abolished the long-standing duty on local authorities to provide gypsy sites.

And it was the previous Tory government which withdrew all funding to develop such sites.

Labour inherited a legacy of massive disinvestment in gypsy sites. We are dealing with the difficult issues surrounding gypsies and travellers and local communities. Local authorities already have powers to evict from unauthorised sites.

In the New Year we will be giving local authorities further powers to speed up the process of enforcement so that they are able to stop illegal encampments. These new 'Temporary Stop Notices' will help local communities tackle this difficult problem.

Under the new housing legislation local authorities will also have to assess the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers in their area. The government is providing funding directly for this, and on a regional basis.

And for the first time they will have to produce plans to show how those needs will be met.